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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**TANZANIA**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Vitamins Reduce Child Deaths

**A vitamin supplement initiative saves an estimated 80,000 children a year**



Photo: USAID/John Dunlop

A young rural mother and her baby received child survival interventions on International AIDS Day in December 2004.

***More than 80 percent of children under 5 years old in Tanzania are now receiving vitamin A supplements.***

In sub-Saharan Africa, 42 percent of children under 5 years old are vitamin A-deficient — a major contributor to illness and death among children. Distributing vitamin A supplements has been shown to reduce infant and child mortality in countries around the world, so in 1997, Tanzania integrated it into its immunization program.

The initiative reached more than half of Tanzania's children under 2 years old, and distribution of vitamin A supplements during national measles immunization days in pilot districts in 1999 and 2000 reached even more people. However, the age group of recipients was limited, and coverage was not nationwide.

In 2001, USAID helped develop a new approach that provided supplements to all children under five twice a year — on World AIDS Day in December and on the Day of the African Child in June. The approach was met with great enthusiasm. The two commemorative dates are popular, well-recognized public days, and they are separated by an interval of about six months, which complies with the global recommendation on how often to provide young children with vitamin A. The campaign also now integrates several other issues, including child rights, national events, growth monitoring and de-worming.

Thus far, more than 80 percent of the target population has been reached by the vitamin A-supplement initiative. This will reduce the number of deaths of children under 5 years old by an estimated 15–20 percent — and save up to 80,000 lives this year.